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An Egyptian Interpretation of the Biblical Account

By

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THE DISCOVERY OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW UNDER KING JOSIAH

AN EGYPTIAN INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
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УРАГАЛЬ АМКОВ
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INTRODUCTION

For many centuries the Old Testament Scriptures and history stood isolated and alone. There was nothing else with which to compare them and so test their character and credibility. The history of the ancient world seemed otherwise to have been hopelessly lost, and its literature, if it had ever existed, to have utterly disappeared. Scholars were reduced to the necessity of endeavouring to make the Biblical text its own critic and historical witness, and to supplement its deficiencies by guesses and assumptions. The whole proceeding was contrary to the method of science: logic lays down that "we cannot argue from a single instance," and in science still less is this possible. Science is founded on the comparative method, and where the means of comparison are wanting, there can be no scientific conclusion.

In default of historical means of comparison, the grammar and the dictionary were appealed to. The grammarian transformed himself into a historian and chemist, and presumed to analyze his documents into separate fragments and assign them to definite epochs. But the attempts to overpass the scientific limits of his study were doomed to failure. The fields of

philology and archæology lie apart : archæology does not provide us with materials for deciding moot points of grammar, and philology is powerless to draw archæological conclusions. There was a time when Indo-European Comparative Philology believed that it could reconstruct the life of the primitive "Aryan" community ; but it was when the new science of archæology was as yet hardly in existence, and the primitive Aryan community whose picture was so confidently painted has long since been relegated to the limbo of mirages. If we are to test the historical credibility of an ancient document, it can only be through its comparison with scientifically ascertained historical facts.

Where the document is ancient the scientifically ascertained historical facts which can be compared with it are generally the facts of archæology. More especially is this the case with documents relating to the ancient East. So far from the Old Testament standing any longer isolated and alone, it is now taking its place in a vast contemporaneous literature which the ancient Oriental world is unexpectedly yielding up to us and the events it records in the general stream of ancient Oriental history. So far as history is concerned, the day of the philologist is past and the day of the archæologist has come. The literature and history of the Old Testament can now at last be studied scientifically, for it is no longer necessary to argue from "a single instance." The once-fashionable theories of German criticism, which are being discarded in the land of their birth, have been compelled to find

a final refuge in alien lands, where the recent work of the Oriental archæologist is still but little known.

Hitherto the Assyriologist has led the way. Palestine was Asiatic, not Egyptian, and its earlier culture was derived from Babylonia. Hence it is the clay tablets and other monuments of Babylonia and Assyria which have hitherto been chiefly useful in throwing light on the Old Testament and its history, and in furnishing the means of comparison demanded by science. Egyptology has been more backward. It is, therefore, with special gratification that I have read the important memoir presented by Professor Naville to the French Academy, the English translation of which is published herewith. Professor Naville is one of the leading Egyptologists of our time, and his long and intimate acquaintance with the inscriptions and other monuments of ancient Egypt, as well as his well-known sobriety of judgment lends peculiar value to his words.

The Assyriologist will unequivocably accept his results. Where the Babylonian buried a clay cylinder under the walls of the temple, the Israelite, like the Egyptian, writing as they both did upon papyrus or parchment, deposited his record of its dedication in the walls themselves. Professor Hommel remarks with justice, in his *Grundriss der Geographie und Geschichte des alten Orients* (p. 171), that von Hummelauer has "hit the right nail on the head" when he points out that Deut. xii.-xxvi. 16 is the book of "the manner of the kingdom," referred to in 1 Sam. x. 25, which has been inserted in the body of the Mosaic

Law. The Temple at Jerusalem was also the chapel royal, and, therefore, quite apart from questions of worship and religion, it was fitting that the volume deposited in the walls of the sanctuary should contain the rules laid down for the government of the king. A similar work existed in Babylonia, where it was ascribed to the culture-god Ea.

It is, indeed, impossible to understand the early books of the Old Testament without a knowledge of Babylonia and its literature. Babylonian culture underlay the civilisation of Western Asia, and that culture was essentially literary. As Professor Naville points out, archæological research has now made it clear that the so-called Phœnician alphabet was not introduced into Palestine until the age of David. Before that period the script in use was the Babylonian cuneiform, and along with the Babylonian script went the Babylonian language. If the older books of the Hebrew Scriptures are of the age to which they lay claim they must originally have been in the Babylonian language and script.

And a careful examination of them shows that such was to a large extent the case. The Assyriologist finds numerous proofs in the existing text that a cuneiform text lies behind it. Sometimes proper names have been miscopied or reproduced in a double form in consequence of the fact that the cuneiform characters have more than one phonetic value; sometimes alternative translations are given for the same Babylonian word; resulting in what is called a "conflate" text and grammatical confusion; sometimes the

meaning of the Babylonian original has been mistaken ; at other times, again, technical Babylonian words have been reproduced in Hebrew letters, or Babylonian idioms repeated which have lost their proper sense and reference through being transplanted to another soil.

The Babylonian Ammi and Zavzava, for instance, have become Ham and Zuzim in Gen. xiv. 5, and Ammon and Zamzummim in Deut. ii. 20, both being equally possible transcriptions of the cuneiform characters ; while Iscah as a duplicate of Milcah, in Gen. xi. 29, owes its existence to the fact that the same cuneiform character may be transcribed either *is* or *mil*. In Gen. iv. 22 we find the ungrammatical and unintelligible expression “a hammerer of every artificer in bronze and iron” ; when we turn the passage back into Assyrian, the difficulty at once disappears, the Hebrew words for “hammerer” and “artificer” being alternative renderings of the same Babylonian term, one of which has made its way from above the line, where it was written in the Babylonian fashion, into the text itself. In Gen. ii. 6, again, we have a technical Babylonian term which, not being understood in Palestine, has led to a mistranslation of the cuneiform original on the part of the Hebrew translator. In Babylonian the word *edu* or *ed* denoted the inundation of the Euphrates and Tigris, by means of which the land was irrigated. In Palestine there were no great rivers ; and the place of the inundation was taken by the rainfall ; the Hebrew translator has accordingly transliterated the foreign term into Hebrew letters ; and not understanding what it exactly meant, has

assigned a wrong sense to the sentence in which it occurs. In Babylonian this was *êdu ina irzitim itelu*, which could signify either “the flood rose in (or on) the earth” or “the flood rose from the earth”; the actual meaning of *êdu* settles that the first meaning is the right one.

One of the most interesting of the Babylonian technical terms which have been transliterated into Hebrew letters is the word used to denote Abram’s bodyguard in Gen. xiv. 14, since it also occurs in a letter in cuneiform found at Taanach, near Megiddo, where the writer uses it of the bodyguard or militia of the shêkh of the place. Equally interesting is the transliteration of the Babylonian expression *metig ammati*, “the high-road of the coastland,” in 2 Sam. viii. 1, which has been the occasion of numberless conjectures and baseless theories. In the original document it simply meant that the conquest of the Philistine cities by David gave him the command of the military road which passed through them.

But it is not only technical terms that have been transferred, as it were bodily, from the cuneiform to the Hebrew text; technical expressions and sayings have been transferred as well. Thus M. Boissier has shown that in Gen. xxv. 23, the common Babylonian phrase “the greater (or elder) country shall serve the smaller (or younger) country” has given rise to two variant translations into Hebrew, or rather to a translation which, not being very applicable to the circumstances of the case, had to be explained by a marginal note. So, again, in Gen. iv. 7, a Babylonian proverb is quoted

which is used of the plague-god, who was the guardian of the gate, ready to punish the owner of the house if he fell into sin ; but the true sense of the quotation has been lost in its passage into Hebrew, and the *sētu* or " good angel " in the first clause, who formed the antithesis to the plague-god, has been turned into an unintelligible Hebrew word.

Such are a few of the examples which go to show what has been the real history of the text of the earlier books of the Old Testament. It is probable that Professor Naville is right in believing that in some instances, at all events, a Hebrew text written in cuneiform characters intervened between the original documents and the text as we now have it. That " the language of Canaan " could be written in cuneiform we know from the Canaanite or Hebrew glosses in the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, as well as from inscriptions on Canaanitish seals. But at present there is no positive proof of this intervening text. All that the Assyriologist can say is that behind a considerable part of the older Hebrew Scriptures there lies an original in the language and script of Babylonia, and that consequently the theories of subjective criticism which are founded on the belief that the Hebrew text is primary will have to return to the region from whence they are derived.

A. H. SAYCE.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW UNDER KING JOSIAH.

THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT INTERPRETED
BY AN EGYPTIAN PARALLEL.

THE excavations which have been made during the last few years on the sites of the ancient Canaanite towns of Gezer, Megiddo and Taanach, have revealed to us that the relations which existed between Palestine and Egypt were closer and more frequent than had hitherto been supposed. The discovery of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, by bringing to light the correspondence between the governors of Palestinian cities on one hand, and their suzerains, the Pharaohs of the XVIIIth Dynasty, and the kings of Mesopotamia on the other, had already apprized us of the important fact that at this epoch the written language of Palestine was Babylonian, and the script cuneiform. Since then a considerable number of Egyptian objects have been found in the land of Canaan. Prof. Thiersch, the explorer of Megiddo, pointed out at the Congress of Archæology in Cairo, that before, and even after, the settlement of the Hebrews, Egyptian influence was in the ascendant

there. We may conclude that as a result of this, the inhabitants of Palestine must at times have borrowed from Egyptian models, in their buildings for instance, and have adopted more than one Egyptian custom.

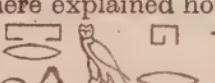
It would therefore seem legitimate to draw attention to certain analogies with Egypt in the writings of the Hebrews, and to give to certain facts an Egyptian interpretation. This is what I propose to attempt here in dealing with an event of great importance which occurred when the kingdom of Judah was drawing to its close, viz. the discovery of the Book of the Law under Josiah. My interpretation of the facts raises some very interesting questions as to the date of the Law and the language in which it was drawn up. The interpretation rests almost exclusively upon archæological grounds, which criticism hitherto seems to have unduly neglected. We are all agreed that the various theories advanced in regard to the composition of the Hebrew writings, and especially in regard to the Pentateuch, rest almost exclusively on internal, that is, literary evidence. The critics of the Old Testament have hardly ever gone outside the limits of the Sacred Text. They have made an analysis of it, I may almost say a dissection, and they carry the work more and more every day into detail. Out of the elements which they believe they have discovered, they have reconstituted the history of Israel, and have drawn up a new view of the composition of the Old Testament, assigning to the various books their writers, dates and place of origin.

How far these various systems, which I shall associate with the name of the critic who carries the greatest weight, that is to say Wellhausen, are in agreement with the monuments and with the results obtained, not by the study of the text, but by the work of the spade in the soil of Palestine and neighbouring countries, is a question worth examining. We have in this connection a most instructive precedent—the Homeric question, which since the time of Schliemann has entirely changed its aspect, and as a result of quite recent excavation, may possibly undergo further modifications.

I cite here, therefore, the Egyptian customs which appear to me to explain the Biblical narrative relating to the discovery of the Book of the Law.

The Sacred Book which we call, for lack of a better title, “The Book of the Dead,” is, as is well known, composed of a great number of chapters, which have no immediate connection with each other, and for which there is no more fixed sequence than there is for the Psalms. Of these chapters, several are terminated by rubrics supplying a date, and mentioning a custom to which I should desire to draw attention.

We will first take Chapter LXIV., the title of which I translate as follows: “The Chapter of the coming out from the day¹ into the Netherworld.” This

¹ I have elsewhere explained how I understand the title of the Book of the Dead ; I translate it: The *Book of the coming out from the day*, that is to say, *the deceased's day*. The life of a man is his day, and has a morning and evening. To come out of his day is to be delivered from that fatal and

chapter is included in the most ancient papyri which we possess, and it appears there in two different editions.

That which bears the title I have just quoted is the longer of the two ; it often occurs after one of the chapters of the *Heart*, to which is attached the following rubric ; I give it in its shortest form :¹

“ This chapter was found at Khmun (Hermopolis) on an alabaster plaque, under the feet of the Majesty of this venerable god (Thoth), in the writing of the god himself, in the time of the Majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Mycerinus. The royal son Hordudef found it while travelling to inspect the Temples of Egypt.”

In two other papyri we find a variant :² in place of “ the writing of the god himself,” it is stated that the chapter is written “ in real lapis lazuli,” which would seem to indicate that the text was written in a beautiful blue made from powdered lapis.³

The point to be noted, however, is that it is under the feet of the god that the chapter is found. The end of the rubric is further extended : “ The royal son Hordudef found it while travelling to inspect the Temples of Egypt. . . .” The words which follow are obscure ; I take it that they mean to express that some one was with him, who read and explained the text to him, or enabled him to understand it. The text

determined duration peculiar to all terrestrial life, to have a limitless existence in time and space (*Religion des anciens Egyptiens*, p. 135).

¹ NAVILLE, *Todt*. II. 99 ; Parma Papyrus.

² NAVILLE, *Todt*. I. pl. 167 ; Louvre Papyrus, III. 89 ; Iouiya Papyrus, pl. XVII.

³ LEPSIUS, *Die Metalle in den Äg. Inschriften*, p. 67.

continues : " He (the royal son) brought it to the King as a marvel when he saw that it was something very mysterious which no one had ever seen or set eyes on before."

The rubric is found attached to this chapter from the XIth Dynasty down to the Roman period. But the historical date is not the main fact ; the point to be noted is that the book was written on a plaque of alabaster placed under the feet of the god, that is, under his statue. One of these alabaster plaques has come down to us. It was found by M. de Morgan at Dahshur in a subterranean chamber. It was placed under a naos which contained a very fine wooden statue, standing, of the XIIth Dynasty period. It was thus literally under the feet of the god. On it is an inscription of fourteen lines, incised and painted blue ; the text forms part of Chapter CLXXXIII. of the Book of the Dead, which is found as early as the Pyramids.

It is possible that we have another relic of the same kind in the Peroffsky stone.¹ It is in the Hermitage Museum at St. Petersburg. It is a slab of very hard stone, measuring 18 × 15 centimetres, and having a thickness of 2 centimetres. Both sides are polished, and inscribed on it is Chapter LXIV., which is precisely the chapter preceding the rubric we have mentioned. The stone is of the period of the XXVIth Dynasty, but we are ignorant of the circumstances connected with its discovery.

¹ GOLÉNISCHEFF, *Ermitage impérial, Inventaire de la collection Egyptienne*, p. 169.

The rubric, as we see, shows us that writings, inscribed on stones, were sometimes placed under statues. An analogous custom has been noticed in Asia Minor in the excavations at the Temple of Ephesus. On the site occupied by the statue of Artemis, Mr. Hogarth found deposited quite a collection of gold ornaments of the date of the earliest temple raised to the goddess. These had, therefore, not been disturbed in the successive reconstructions which the Temple had undergone.

If jewellery were placed under the feet of a goddess, we may well suppose that under the image of Thoth there would have been deposited one of the books of which he was believed to be the author. When we read that the book was written by the god himself, and that it was something very mysterious which no one had previously seen or examined, it would appear to indicate that it was in ancient characters, the deciphering of which was but little known. The discovery of the longer version of Chapter LXIV. is therefore attributed to the time of Mycerinus, a king of the IVth Dynasty.

In the most ancient documents of the Book of the Dead, side by side with this longer version of Chapter LXIV., there is a second much shorter one bearing a slightly different title¹: "The chapter for knowing the chapters of the coming out from the day, in a single chapter," or, as we should say, "The abstract

¹ NAVILLE, *Todt.* II. pl. 139; Nu Papyrus; BUDGE, *Book of the Dead*, Text, p. 141; Iouiya Papyrus, pl. IX.; GOODWIN, *Zeitschr.*, 1866, p. 55, XIth Dynasty sarcophagus.

in a single chapter of the chapters of the coming out from the day." The rubric is as follows : " This chapter was found in the foundations of Ami Hunnu by the overseer of the builders of a wall, in the time of the King Usaphaïs¹; they were mysterious characters which no one had hitherto seen or examined."

Thus the shorter version of Chapter LXIV. seems to have been discovered by a mason in the foundations of Ami Hunnu, which I believe to be one of the sanctuaries of Heliopolis. The date of this discovery, or that of the wall, goes back, according to the rubric, to the time of King Usaphaïs, the fifth sovereign of the 1st Dynasty. This abridged section was therefore considerably older than the other.

Sir G. Maspero, speaking of these two rubrics, tells us² that the mystic writing inserted in the Book of the Dead as Chapter LXIV., which in later times was supposed to exercise a decisive influence over the future life of man, was known to be somewhat later than the rest of the formulas of which that work was composed ; the wisest of the people did not, however, permit themselves to regard it any the less as being of Divine origin, and gave out that it had been found in the Sanctuary of Hermopolis, under King Usaphaïs of the 1st Dynasty, or rather under the pious Mycerinus.

I cannot accept this interpretation, which appears

¹ We might also translate it : " The chief of those who rebuilt a wall *dating* from King Usaphaïs."

² MASPERO, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 224.

to me to be opposed to the facts established by the texts. In the first place, it is not a question of one chapter only, but of two, both of which are certainly similar, but were not confounded with one another by the ancient Egyptians, who assigned to each a different date, as is clear from the rubric.

Moreover, these 64th chapters, far from being of later date than the others, are found in one of the most ancient collections that we possess, among the texts written on the Sarcophagus of a Queen of the XIth Dynasty. Both of them figure there, each with its special rubric, which informs us that one was found on an alabaster plaque at Hermopolis, and that the other was discovered by a master mason at Heliopolis. These two versions were contemporary with Chapter XVII., one of the most important in the book, a chapter which is certainly of Heliopolitan origin.

Two papyri have just been added to the number of those which have acquainted us with these facts ; one, acquired by the British Museum, and the other belonging to the father-in-law of Amenophis III., of the XVIIIth Dynasty. In both documents we find the two versions and the two rubrics. There was, therefore, an established tradition attributing a different date and a different origin to these two versions, and relegating them to a remote period ; moreover, in the papyri of more recent date, the abridged version, the more ancient of the two, that of Usaphaïs, has along with its rubric disappeared altogether.

I cannot, therefore, give my adherence to the theory now so constantly put forward of the modern forger

placing an ancient name on the monument of which he is the author, for the purpose of giving it an air of antiquity, and thus rendering it more worthy of credence. I should be at a loss to explain why, in the early papyri, this Chapter LXIV., in which that of the *heart* is often included, should be the only one to have an historical rubric, while others, quite as important, such as XVII. or CXXV., should be without one.

It is evident that among religious writings these texts were regarded as being of the highest antiquity. One of them even went back to the 1st Dynasty. But here again, it is not so much the date on which I desire to lay stress, as the details given in the rubrics. These show us that these documents were hidden, not indeed under the feet of a statue, but in the foundation wall of a sanctuary. Here is an indication of a custom of which we have a convincing example in the inscriptions of the Temple of Denderah—a building of the Ptolemaic period.

These inscriptions are in one of the crypts; or rather in a secret passage, the walls of which were covered with representations and ritual directions. At the end of one of the lists of festivals, we read as follows¹: “The King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Men-kheper-ra, son of Ra, Thothmes III., has caused his monuments to be erected to his Mother Hathor, the sovereign of Denderah, the daughter of Ra, the mistress of heaven, the queen of the gods, after he had found the great Rule (custom) of Denderah, in

¹ DÜMICHEN, *Baukunde der Tempelanlagen von Dendera*, pl. 15 and 16; MARIETTE, *Denderah*, III., pl. 78 and 79.

an ancient text, written on a goatskin of the time of the followers of Horus. It was found within a brick wall of the House of the South, which dated from the time of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, the master of the two worlds, Meri-Ra, the son of the sun, the master of the diadems, Pepi."

A second analogous case is found in the same corridor ; it is much shorter than the preceding one : " This is the Great Rule of Denderah. The reconstruction of the monuments was made by King Men-kheper-ra Thothmes [I omit his titles, which are the same as in the other text], after that he had found it, i.e. the Rule, in the ancient writings of the time of King Khufu."

We are in Ptolemaic times. We are told that when the Great King of the XVIIIth Dynasty, Thothmes III., repaired the temple of the goddess, there was discovered in a brick wall of the time of Pepi, that is to say of a King of the VIth Dynasty, a goatskin on which was written, in characters of the time of the followers of Horus, the Great Rule, the Use of Denderah. Another text attributes this writing to the time of Khufu, a King of the IVth Dynasty, the builder of the Great Pyramid.

In such a case it is difficult to uphold the theory that these are forgeries. We are dealing with texts which were not meant for the people, but were intended solely for the priests, and moreover, they were hidden in an obscure passage which formed part of the crypt of the Temple. These texts were found in the reign of Thothmes III., in a brick wall dating from King Pepi

of the VIth Dynasty. This wall, according to the new chronology of Prof. Eduard Meyer, who reduces considerably the dates of the ancient Empire, must have stood already a thousand years, a not unusual age for a building built in Egyptian brick. The restoration made by King Thothmes probably consisted in substituting stone for the brick he found there, as he says he did in several places : at Karnak, in the Temple of Ptah, and at Semneh. In pulling down the old brick building, which perhaps was ruinous, the workmen discovered the document, which, like Chapter LXIV., must therefore have been in the foundations.

The document was on a goatskin, and the script was that of the followers of Horus, or, according to the other text, of the period of Khufu. I cannot help believing that these two statements mean the same thing. The followers of Horus, the *νέκυες* of the Greeks, are mythological beings who preceded the historic kings. They were the companions of the god when he left Ethiopia to make the conquest of Egypt. Khufu is the first king of the IVth Dynasty ; he is therefore a very ancient king who is several hundred years earlier than the King Pepi who built the brick wall. The script of the document in the eyes of scribes of Thothmes' time, was that of a period so remote that it was lost in the mists of antiquity ; and as they were not particularly well versed in history and chronology, they were unable to distinguish the various phases of those bygone ages. One might have attributed the writing to the followers of Horus, and another to Khufu ; at any rate this is what is related in Ptolemaic times. It

seems that they were unable to understand the script ; for to them also it appeared as composed of “ mysterious characters, which no one had ever seen or looked at.” Here again the important fact to be noted with regard to the inscription is that we have a religious document deposited in a foundation wall ; this information is given in an historic form, with a precision which adds to its value.

We will now leave Egypt, and transport ourselves to Jerusalem. This is what we read in 2 Kings xxii. 3. I follow the Revised Version in the main, inserting a few words here and there from other translations when they approach more closely to the original.

“ And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, that the king sent Shaphan . . . the scribe to the house of the Lord, saying, Go up to Hilkiah,¹ the High Priest, that he may deliver [*confletur pecunia, Vulg.*] the money which is brought into the house of the Lord, which the keepers of the door [*threshold, Heb.*] have gathered of the people : they shall deliver the money into the hands of those that have the oversight of the work in the house of the Lord : and let them use it for the workmen which are in the house of the Lord, to repair the breaches (cracks, fissures) of the house ; unto the carpenters,

¹ The transcription of these names varies in each version : the LXX gives in Kings Σαφάν and Χελκέιας, and in Chronicles Σαφάν and Χελκίας ; the Vulgate, Saphan and Helcias ; the Abbé Crampon follows the latter ; the R.V. gives Hilkiah and Shaphan ; the German version, Saphan and Hilkia ; Segond gives Schaphan and Hilkija ; Perret-Gentil, Saphan and Hilkia.

and to the builders, and to the masons; and for buying timber and hewn stone to repair the house. Howbeit they shall not demand an account of the money delivered into their hand; for they deal faithfully. Then Hilkiah, the High Priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Yahveh. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan, and he read it.

“And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have emptied [spent, *conflaverunt pecunium, Vulg.*] out the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of those that have the oversight of the work in the house of the Lord. And Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the Priest hath given me a book, and Shaphan read it before the king.”

This is the narrative as interpreted by the Vulgate and modern continental Versions. It will be remarked that I have not mentioned the LXX; it is because in that translation we find an important variant. The main part of the instructions given to Shaphan the scribe are already executed; they are mentioned in the past tense, and the whole forms an historic narrative, which is more consecutive and homogeneous than the Hebrew text. The following is the translation of it:—

“The 18th year and the 8th month,¹ it came to pass that the king sent Shaphan, the scribe of the house of the Lord, saying: ‘Go up to Khelkeias, the

¹ The date of the month is not given in the Hebrew.

High Priest, and seal (gather together) the money brought into the house of the Lord, and which the keepers of the door have gathered of the people ; that they may deliver it into the hands of those who execute the work and who are established in the house of the Lord.' He delivered it to those who were engaged in the work in the house of the Lord in repairing the breaches of the house [the Translator uses the Hebrew word *τὸ βέδεκ*], to the carpenters, the builders and the masons, and for buying wood and hewn stone to repair the breaches of the house.¹ Howbeit, there was no account asked of them for the money delivered to them, for they dealt faithfully." The rest of the narrative is identical with the version I have given above.

The LXX translation was made before the adoption of the Masoretic punctuation, for the change of the point in a single word *וַיְתַהֵן* in v. 5, so as to vocalize it *וַיִּתְהַנֵּן* in the place of *וַיִּתְהַנֵּן* would be sufficient to give to the words the sense of *kai ἐδωκεν* and to the sentence an historic turn. As far as I am aware, the English version alone among modern translations adopts the historic form in the last sentence : " Howbeit there was no reckoning made with them of the money that was delivered into their hand ; for they dealt faithfully."

It is immaterial whether we adopt the Hebrew or the LXX rendering, for both give the required information. They tell us that the walls of the Temple exhibited cracks or settlements, and that hewn stone

¹ The Hebrew does not repeat the word "breach."

was required to repair them, which indicates considerable restoration, involving even the foundations.

In the twelfth chapter of the same book we find an account of a similar restoration, which is described in the same words. It would appear that in the time of Joash, the work had not been executed very satisfactorily, since it had to be resumed after a short period. However that may be, we recognize here our first connection with Egypt. We might cite a great number of inscriptions in which a king, and particularly a young king, on ascending the throne, relates that he repaired, or as he says, renewed, one or more sacred buildings which were threatened by ruin ; sometimes, as we have seen, by substituting stone for the original brick. In acting thus, the Egyptian monarch sought to conciliate the good will of the god whose dwelling he improved.

A similar feeling prompted Joash and Josiah. It is, however, under the latter King only, that an event of the deepest interest took place.

The Temple was in the hands of a large number of workmen and masons, who were restoring such walls as were in bad condition. In the house of Yahveh, and consequently in the midst of this crowd of artisans and their overseers, was Hilkiah, the High Priest. The King sends Shaphan the Scribe to him to see to the payment of the cost of the repairs, and the High Priest at once says to him : “ I have found the book of the Law.” Is it not natural, I ask, to connect this discovery with the repairs and the rebuilding of the old crumbling walls ? In the process of demolition

the workmen must have either come upon a foundation deposit, or the book must have fallen out from a crevice, and the High Priest must have picked it up from among the rubbish. The analogy with Egypt seems to me so striking, that I cannot refrain from giving an Egyptian interpretation to the passage ; the Book of the Law was immured in a foundation wall ; the depositing of the book must therefore go back to the building of the Temple, that is to say, to the time of Solomon.

So far I have taken the Book of Kings only as my authority, and have not quoted the Book of Chronicles, which, however, cannot be put completely aside (2 Chron. xxxiv. 8). The account is fuller than that of the Book of Kings, and the historic narration better expressed. We there see the execution of the instructions given to Shaphan, and we learn the names of the inspectors placed over the workmen. The repairs, however, are spoken of in a general manner only, and the bad condition of the walls is not mentioned. The outline of the narrative is the same ; there are, however, two words which are of importance—"Hilkiah found the book of the Law of the Lord given by Moses," or as it is in the Hebrew, "by the hand of Moses." It appears to me that these words indicate that this book seemed to Hilkiah to be very ancient writing, dating back to a remote antiquity. The episode has something in common with that which we found in the Denderah inscription, where it states that the book of the Great Rule was in the writing of the followers of Horus.

" And Hilkiah said to Shaphan the scribe, I have

found the book of the Law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan, and he read it. And Shaphan the scribe . . . brought the king word again.” The account in the Book of Kings is very brief. It is, therefore, all the more remarkable that it mentions that Shaphan read the book. If we take the word “read,” נִרְאָה,¹ in the sense in which it is usually employed in the Old Testament, it would appear that we ought to translate it thus: “Shaphan read it to him, or read it aloud before him.” Why is this stated of Shaphan and not of Hilkiah? Because, in my opinion, the High Priest was unable to read the book.

He hands it to Shaphan, who is thus the first to read it, and who goes afterwards “to bring the King word.” Shaphan speaks of it to Josiah as of a “book” without further qualification, and subsequently, after the public reading, the writing is exclusively called “the book of the Covenant.”

I may be asked how did Hilkiah know that it was the book of the Law, since he was not able to read it? It was because it had been found in the house of the Lord. According to tradition, the erection of buildings and the inscription on them of the text of the Law were contemporaneous. Do we not read in the Book of Joshua (viii. 32), that when he had built an altar on Mount Ebal, “he wrote there upon the stones

¹ נִרְאָה, *laut lesen, vorlesen* (Gesenius), “to read aloud to one or more hearers,” or “read in public”: see Exod. xxiv. 7; Josh. viii. 34; 2 Kings xxiii. 2; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 8; Jer. xxxvi. 6, 10, 13, etc.; Esther vi. 1.

a copy of the Law of Moses which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel”? ¹

I cannot believe that Hilkiah had read the book before giving it to Shaphan; and yet we should have expected that the High Priest would be the first to gain information about the Law. He was the person most interested; and he it is who leads the deputation who go to consult the Prophetess, and who plays the principal part in the religious reform. Can we suppose that the High Priest’s education could have been so defective that he would be unable to read a book written in the ordinary script in use in his time? It would have been strange in a man occupying the highest position, and who was the supreme authority in matters religious. It is much more probable that if Hilkiah were unable to decipher the book, it was because it was in a script no longer in use in the time of Josiah. Shaphan, the king’s scribe, who was obliged by his office to correspond on State affairs, must have been more competent in this respect than Hilkiah. In particular, he must

¹ The LXX translation Καὶ ἔγραψεν Ἰησοῦς ἐπὶ τῶν λίθων τὸ δευτερονόμιον, νόμον Μωϋσῆ, ἐνώπιον τῶν νιῶν Ἰσραήλ. Some commentators have interpreted the words *בְּרוּת הַנֶּשֶׁמֶן* as signifying the Law of Moses as we find it in Deuteronomy. It appears that the LXX and the Vulgate took it in the same sense.

With regard to the last part of the sentence, the modern versions and some MSS. of the Septuagint faithfully follow the Hebrew text: “the Law which Moses had written in the sight of the children of Israel.” The LXX reading which we have cited, which is that of both the Tischendorf and Swete editions, seems preferable to the Hebrew. The words, “in the sight of the children of Israel,” apply to Joshua and not to Moses. Joshua performs a solemn act, which is to serve as an example; he inscribes the Law on the Stones of the Altar, according to the commands of Moses as given in Deuteronomy (xxvii. 8).

have known cuneiform writing, which was that of Josiah's neighbours, the Assyrians and Babylonians, with whom the kingdom of Judah had frequent relations.

What was the book which, hidden in the foundations of the Temple, was discovered at the moment of this great restoration? If we consult the critics, nearly all are unanimous in affirming, with St. Jerome, that it was the Book of Deuteronomy. Some take it to be the whole book; others believe it to be what is known as the Deuteronomic document, namely, chapters xii.-xxvi. The opinions of critics on the structure, and especially on the date of the book, are of a very divergent character.

I give here a few examples. Dillmann¹ affirms in the most positive manner his belief in the unity of the composition. "Deuteronomy," he tells us, "is decidedly not an original book of the Law. On the contrary, it is a new presentment, a new explanation of the ancient Law to the people. There is no reasonable motive in separating chapters xii.-xxvi. from the remainder of the book, for in these chapters the same spirit, the same language and the same aim are clearly manifest." Delitzsch maintains a similar position.

Dr. Driver² tells us that the structure of the book is relatively simple.

The body of the book is stamped throughout by a single purpose, and bears the marks of being the work of one writer, who has collected his material from

¹ *Die Bilcher Exodus und Leviticus*, Vorwort, pp. 7 and 8.

² *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, 3rd ed., p. 66.

various sources. Properly speaking, Mosaic legislation begins at chapter xii.; it is preceded by an exordium and an historic introduction, chapters xxvii. and xxviii. forming the conclusion of it.

M. Gautier,¹ while admitting the relative homogeneity of the book, distinguishes the lesser exordium (chapters i.-iv. 40) and the greater exordium (chapters v.-xi.), and argues from them the impossibility of their having been composed simultaneously and with the original intention of being joined together.

M. Westphal,² who maintains that Deuteronomy is, of all the legislative compositions in the Pentateuch, that which brings us into closest contact with the mind of Moses, admits, however, that the book must have been twice edited : “on the first occasion by an author regarding the Law from a social and religious point of view as the original, complete and definite work of Moses the Law-giver ; on the second occasion it was edited from a literary, historic and documentary point of view, by a writer who added to it what appeared to him necessary to complete it.” There was therefore a primitive Deuteronomy, which became, but at a later date, the fifth book of the Pentateuch.

It will be seen to what an extent the opinions of critics differ, even when they are all based on the same kind of proofs, that is to say, on internal evidence—conclusions arrived at on an analysis of the book as compared with the other sacred writings. These critics confine themselves entirely to the limits of the

¹ *Introduction à l'Ancien Testament*, pp. 79 and 83.

² *Les Sources du Pentateuque*, ii. p. 43.

Old Testament ; it is the literary proof pure and simple. In a discussion of this nature it is evident that the subjective factor, personal opinion, plays a large part.

The divergences are still more marked with regard to the date at which the book was composed. Sir G. Maspero, who was one of the first to point out the analogy existing between the Egyptian rubrics and the discovery of the book of the Law,¹ treats both these documents in the same way ; both are in his view late compositions attributed to an ancient author in order to give them an indisputable authority, and the book in the case of Josiah was, in his opinion, the work of the priests anxious to compel the king to bring about a reform in accordance with their own aims. Dr. Cheyne has used the information furnished by Sir G. Maspero to combat the latter's point of view. In a recent article, however, he seems to say that he is prepared to adopt it, and this he has evidently done in a later work on Deuteronomy.²

According to those two authorities, therefore, the Book of Deuteronomy is a forgery, of which Hilkiah,

¹ *The Passing of the Empires*, pp. 506 *et seq.*

² *Orient. Literaturzeit.*, vol. xi. p. 195. Dr. Cheyne seems to think that I claim to have been the first to point out the connection between the Egyptian rubrics and the narrative of the Book of Kings. This is not the case, for I am fully aware that M. Maspero drew attention to it before I did, and I acknowledged this fact in a lecture I gave on the subject. But, as will be seen, the interpretation which Sir G. Maspero gives to these texts differs totally from mine. As far as I know, none of my fellow-Egyptologists have explained the Egyptian texts by reference to the custom of placing writings under the feet of the statues or in foundation deposits, a custom which Solomon must have followed, and which led to the discovery of the book of the Law under Josiah.

for his own ends, was the author. Wellhausen¹ and Kuenen² both share this opinion, although they hesitate to state it in so many words. In order to bring about the reform desired by the priests, it was necessary to trick the King, and the book which they had compiled to further their ends was used for this purpose.

Other critics assign the redaction of the book to the Prophetic period during the reign of Hezekiah (Westphal) or that of Manasseh (Driver), while there are certain writers still left who maintain that Deuteronomy is, like the rest of the Pentateuch, a genuine Mosaic document.³

I am not a Biblical critic, and I have no pretension to assume the part of a judge among all these authorities, of whom I have cited but a small number. I desire merely to bring to bear on the discussion an external argument, which, at first sight, has nothing to do with the contents of the book, but which, nevertheless, places it before us in a somewhat different light. Supported by the Egyptian texts which I have quoted above, and also by the Babylonian custom of placing an inscribed document under the foundations of a temple, I conclude by analogy that the Book of Deuteronomy was deposited in the walls of the Jewish Temple, and consequently that its date at the latest is that of the time of Solomon.

¹ "Im Jahre 621, vor Ostern, wurde das Deuteronomium als zufällig wiederaufgefundenes Buch dem Könige in die Hand gespielt."—*Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte*, p. 131.

² *The Hexateuch*, p. 214.

³ BISSELL, *The Pentateuch*, pp. 248 *et seq.* J. ORR, *Murray's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, art. "Deuteronomy."

This explains to a certain extent why the book was written. What reason could there be for drawing up afresh all these laws, which with a very few exceptions we find in Exodus or in other books of the Old Testament? Why should there be two forms of the same code? It is easy now to understand why. These laws were scattered about in various books; a portion of them perhaps had been handed down by oral tradition. It was necessary to collect them into a single document which could be placed in a foundation deposit, and a short historical introduction was added, setting forth the circumstances in which these laws, before the death of Moses, had been promulgated in the presence of the people, the subject-matter of the introduction being the events of the last month of the sojourn of the Israelites in the desert. It is, in fact, a *résumé* of the Mosaic legislation, which, like Chapter LXIV. of the Book of the Dead deposited in the wall, and called "the chapters of the coming out from the day in a single chapter," might be entitled "the books of the Law in a single book."

It is evident that in many cases there are departures from the original, and that the *résumé* is not textually exact. But account must be taken of the circumstances; these at the time of the building of the Temple were not the same as obtained at a previous period. Dr. Driver himself, who places the redaction of the book under Manasseh, and who will not admit that Deuteronomy is a recapitulation of the laws contained in the preceding books, gives us unintentionally in his analysis the explanation of many of these divergences. For

instance, in regard to chapter xvii., he would say that it shows how the monarchy might be established without contravening the fundamental principles of the Theocracy ; other passages would appear to him to indicate a great change in the condition of the nation—the same chapter, the seventeenth, he says, is coloured with reminiscences of the time of Solomon.

It seems to me that if we adopt the idea of its being a code of laws destined to be placed in the Temple foundations, Deuteronomy would lead to some interesting, and occasionally unexpected, conclusions. I will adduce one which appears to me of great importance. In the whole of the book there is not a single allusion to the Temple at Jerusalem ;¹ the only mention of locality is of the “place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name there,” and to make it His habitation (Deut. xii. 5). Now, the depositing of this book in the foundations of the Temple, established definitely and, so to speak, gave the sanction of God Himself to the fact that the Temple was indeed that place. The act was equivalent to placing the name of Yahveh there ; it would no longer be possible to move thence, and to carry about, as in the case of the Ark, this book of the Covenant, this fundamental Charter, on which the Kingdom of Solomon was to rest—a book which was to last as long as the sacred edifice, and was to be handed down

¹ I cannot refrain from quoting this singular assertion of Kuenen's (*The Hexateuch*, p. 217) : “Deuteronomy presupposes the existence of the Temple of Jerusalem. It is true that the usual formula runs : ‘the place which Yahveh shall choose,’ but this is only because the laws are put into the mouth of Moses.”

intact to posterity. This volume, buried within the stones or bricks of the wall, was more effectively hidden from the eyes of the people than even the holy place itself ; it was as if Yahveh Himself had placed it there, and it had become, indeed (to use an expression drawn from the book) one of those “secret things” which “belong unto the Lord our God.”

We have noticed that the Temple is not mentioned in Deuteronomy. It is well known how much has been deduced from omissions of such a nature, in order to prove the date of this or that writing. There is another omission which appears to me much more important, but to which I merely draw attention in passing. There is no mention of Assyria in the book.¹

The foreign power *par excellence*, that which is the symbol of an oppressor to be feared above everything, is Egypt. This seems to me to tell directly against the opinion which would place the redaction of Deuteronomy at a date subsequent to Hezekiah. The great empire whose armies had of late again and again overrun Palestine, bringing the Kingdom of Judah to the verge of destruction, so that Jerusalem was saved only by a miracle—that Empire is passed over in silence. On the other hand, the writer reverts several times to the Egypt out of which Yahveh had brought His people a few centuries before. If, as several critics maintain, the Book of Deuteronomy is a forgery, composed by Hilkiah for his own ends, is it credible that he could have been so successful in thus completely ignoring the circumstances of his own time ?

¹ BISSELL, *The Pentateuch*, pp. 278 *et seq.*

This is a literary question outside my domain, which I leave to others to answer.

Before dealing with an important query which arises here, I wish to reply to some of the objections raised against the interpretation which I have given to the narrative in the Book of Kings.

The critics call it an hypothesis : doubtless it is one, and I have no wish to make any protest against this term. But may not the same word be applied to all the theories which have been put forward as to the date and composition of the book ? If we are not to regard Deuteronomy as the fifth of the books of Moses, if we reject the name of the author and the position assigned to the document in the Canon of the Old Testament, we must of necessity fall back into the region of conjecture and hypothesis. What else is the forgery theory, supported by Wellhausen and Kuenen, or the attribution of the book to the reign of Manasseh by Dr. Driver, or M. Westphal's suggestion of the collection of the Mosaic documents by some prophet under Hezekiah ? All these are merely suppositions which fall in with these critics' way of regarding the writings of the Old Testament, and lacking up to the present time historical proofs.

Some critics find a difficulty in believing that the Deuteronomic document, in existence in the time of Solomon, a copy of which the High Priest had discovered, should have remained unknown to the intervening generations. This does not seem to me to raise a serious difficulty. The troublous times which marked the close of Solomon's reign, and continued

during that of his son Rehoboam and his successors, are well known. It is also evident that this book, prepared for depositing in the wall, was not the only copy in existence. Had it not been already even enjoined in Deut. xxxi. 26; that another copy should be "put by the side of the Ark," which itself contained the two tables of stone placed in it by Moses on Mount Horeb ?¹ The High Priest also must have had a copy at his disposal.

How long, however, was the Law as enjoined in Deuteronomy observed? Solomon himself was the first to set it aside; Rehoboam did not show any greater respect for it, not to mention the fact that it was in his reign that the Temple was pillaged by the Egyptians. It follows therefore that the Law must very soon have been lost or forgotten; if not in its entirety, at least in a great measure. The proof of this appears to me to be found in the actual text that we are considering. On hearing the words of the book read out, which contained not only the Commandments, but the terrible maledictions of the twenty-ninth chapter, the King rends his clothes; he sends in haste to inquire of Yahveh, because, he adds, "our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us." In Josiah's mind the Law had passed into oblivion at an early date. We know what the

¹ In an article in which he discusses the date that I assign to the Book of Deuteronomy, Prof. Haupt rejects the passages of the Book of Kings relating to the Ark: 1 Kings vi. 19; viii. 9, 21. According to this critic these are later *Deuteronomic* additions (*Orient. Literaturzeit.*, 1908, 122).

expression "our fathers" denotes in the mouth of the Kings of Judah. Doubtless before Josiah's time Hezekiah had "kept the Commandments which Yahveh had commanded Moses," but the reform which the latter King had endeavoured to effect had been partial and merely transitory. Hezekiah had as his successors two irreligious kings, one of whom, Manasseh, reigned fifty-five years. Thus during the seventy-five years following the death of Hezekiah, not to mention all the sovereigns who had previously disobeyed it, the Law had been openly violated. It is comprehensible therefore that Josiah should speak as he did, and there is nothing to astonish us in the fact that he regarded the discovery as that of something hitherto unknown to him.

Would it be easier to admit that some Priest or Prophet had composed this book in the reign of Manasseh, and had deposited it surreptitiously in some corner or hiding-place where it was soon entirely forgotten? Why should it have been deposited in the Temple? Why even should the book have been composed at all, if the author intended to make no use of it, and if the Law were not meant to be read aloud to the people?

Some critics again are astonished that there should have been no mention made of this book on the occasion of the building of the Temple. The reply is simple. A deposit of this nature would take place at the laying of the first stone, which in Egypt was a ceremony accompanied with some solemnity, and with rites which we see represented in the bas-reliefs. Probably the

foundation of the Temple was laid with some ritual of this kind. Even now, in the East, such a custom survives when the building of the house of a private person is in question. In the account of the building of the Temple, the laying of the first stone is passed over in silence. Hence there was no reason for mentioning the deposit of the book, which would form part of the ceremony.

There remains one objection drawn from the text of Deuteronomy itself. Dr. Steuernagel (and other critics, I believe, with him) cannot believe that Solomon was the author of the laws relating to horses and "strange women" (Deut. xvii. 16 *et seq.*) for he himself completely ignored those commands, allowing himself, as he did, a large harem consisting of many foreign women, and even building sanctuaries to the divinities whom they worshipped, contrary to what the Law of Deuteronomy expressly enjoins (xiii. 7).

The reply to this objection is that Deuteronomy is not a code of laws promulgated by Solomon himself and of which he was the author. It is a collection, a codification of previous laws, always spoken of as the work of Moses. The King would not have undertaken such a compilation himself. He must have appealed to the wisdom and experience of the most devout adherents of Yahveh, of men best versed in His laws, especially as Solomon was quite young at the time, and the building of the Temple was his first undertaking. We can easily imagine a prophet, Nathan, for instance, purposely inserting these laws in Solomon's code, in order to save the young

sovereign, if possible, from the pitfalls into which he subsequently fell. What would lead us to this conclusion is the fact, that immediately after the command, “Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold” (xvii. 17), the text directs him to write a copy of the Law in a book for himself, that it may be “with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life.” This is moreover the opinion of Josephus, who tells us that the grave errors of conduct of which Solomon was guilty, were precisely those that the legislator had in view when he forbade the King to marry foreigners.¹ Far from telling against the date proposed for the redaction of Deuteronomy, these laws, if we recall the times of Solomon and the conditions described in the Book of Kings, appear on the contrary a proof in support of its earlier date.

Among the very few critics who have taken into consideration the Egyptian interpretation which I have proposed for this passage in the Book of Kings,²

¹ Τοῦτ' αὐτὸν ὑπιδομένου τοῦ νομοθέτου προειπόντος μὴ γαμεῖν τὰς ἀλλοτριοχώρους, *Ant. Jud.*, viii. 192.

² *Orient. Literaturzeit.*, 1907, p. 610; 1908, p. 188. Dr. Hermann (*Zeitschr. für die ältest. Wiss.*, 1908, p. 291), who recognizes the value of the Egyptian analogies which I have pointed out, considers, however, that I have not followed a legitimate method (*methodisch unzulässig*) in drawing from an Egyptian custom the conclusion that the book found by Hilkiah was a foundation deposit; “besides we have not any absolute proof that Hilkiah really found the Book of the Law.” It is true that we have no proof of Hilkiah’s statement, but we might say the same of the majority of the facts related by the author of the Book of Kings, or by any historian.

M. Grimme and Dr. Kittel are the only ones so far who appear to have given to it their adhesion.

Hilkiah, the High Priest, gives the book to Shaphan the Scribe, who, after perusing it, reads it aloud to the King. I revert again to the Egyptian texts ; it is said of one of these that it was written in mysterious signs which no one had ever seen ; at Denderah we learn that the writing was that of the followers of Horus, that is of a very remote period anterior to the first historic King. I cannot help believing that this was the case at the time of Hilkiah's discovery. He is unable to read the document which he found ; Shaphan the Scribe alone is able to do so.

On this point, the narrative of the Book of Chronicles appears to afford an explanation. It adds two words : "Hilkiah the priest found the book of the Law of the Lord *by the hand of Moses*" (2 Chron. xxxiv. 15). The majority of the translations take these words to apply to the Law in the figurative sense, and translate "given by Moses" (R.V.) as in Numbers xv. 23, "all that the Lord hath commanded you by the hand of Moses," where the LXX reads ἐν χειρὶ Μωϋσῆ, as also in several other parallel passages.

But when it is a question, not of a command given orally, but of a book containing that command, ought not the meaning to be taken more literally ? It would indeed appear that the LXX version has not taken it in the figurative sense, since it translates the expression not by ἐν χειρὶ, but διὰ χειρὸς Μωϋσῆ, which would appear to mean "by the hand of Moses."

If this should be the case, it is evident that we

must not take these words as implying that Hilkiah had found an autograph MS. of the great Lawgiver ; but rather, as I read it, that the book was written " as Moses would have written it," or " in the writing of his day ;" and this would explain why Hilkiah could not decipher it, and had recourse to Shaphan. Here we are confronted with a very important question, which, till now, scarcely seems to have presented itself to the mind of the critics : If there were any Mosaic writings composed by the Lawgiver himself, or by those who were nearly contemporaneous with him, in what language and in what script were they written ?

It is impossible for me to deal here with this question exhaustively. I desire merely to raise it, and to draw attention to what I would call the extrinsic facts, those, namely, which we have learnt from recent excavations. These facts appear to be entirely opposed to what has, up till now, been considered an unassailable dogma, unanimously agreed to by all Hebraists, and which no one has ventured to attack, that the most ancient writings of the Israelites were in Hebrew.

I have consulted on this subject two recent works by two authors of considerable weight. Dr. Briggs¹ points out that, according to the Book of Genesis, Abraham was a native of Ur in Chaldæa, and the monuments of that city " reveal that about 2000 b.c. Ur was the seat of an important literary development." I am not aware if it is known with any certainty what language was *spoken* in Ur, but on the other hand, it is well

¹ *General Introduction to the Study of the Holy Scripture*, p. 52.

ascertained what was the *written* language, and this was not Hebrew. The characters used for writing were cuneiform. Dr. Briggs adds : "Whether Abraham adopted the language of the Canaanites or brought the Hebrew with him from the East, is unimportant, for the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian are nearer to the Hebrew and Phœnician than they are to the other Semitic families."

"Hebrew," . . . continues Dr. Briggs, "was the language of the ancient inhabitants of Canaan. This dialect is preserved only in a few proper names, and in the glosses of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets." "There is not the slightest doubt," writes M. Gautier, "that the language of the Canaanites was what we call Hebrew, and that the Israelites both spoke and wrote it from the time of their occupation of Palestine until the late period when it was supplanted by Aramaic." M. Gautier,¹ like Dr. Briggs, mentions the proper names, and adds : "It is safe to affirm that from the time of the earliest migrations of the Hebrews into Palestine, the Canaanite population already settled there spoke the language to which we give the name of Hebrew. At all events, the names of places, such as Hebron, etc., no less than the personal names, show with unmistakable clearness that the Canaanites spoke perfectly pure Hebrew."

The glosses of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets and the proper names just referred to are therefore the main proofs adduced by critics that Moses, Joshua, and Samuel spoke and wrote Hebrew.

¹ *Introduction à l'Ancien Testament*, pp. 19 and 20.

With regard to the so-called glosses of the Tel-el-Amarna letters, it is certain that here and there we find words which differ from the usual Babylonian orthography and resemble more closely the Hebrew. All that can be proved by this is, that there existed side by side with the written language, a popular language, differing in some measure from the former. But is not the same true of every country in the world? The written language is never an exact reflection of the spoken language, especially among peoples whose literary education is still undeveloped.

The most convincing proof that no written Hebrew language existed at that date, is the Tel-el-Amarna correspondence itself. In it we find a collection of nearly 300 letters from not only several Kings of Mesopotamia, but from a great number of Palestinian cities, including Tyre and Sidon. They were written by governors whose names clearly show that they are natives of the country. They are addressed to their sovereign, the King of Egypt, and furnish him with a report of what has taken place in the towns over which they rule. The report is in the Babylonian language, which some Egyptian scribes must have understood, as letters were sent to Syria by the Egyptian Foreign Office in the same language. The King, however, did not know the language himself, for one of the Mesopotamian Princes sent him a dragoman to translate the letters to him. The language, in which they drew up their reports, was written in cuneiform script, and was the Babylonian language of Ur in Chaldæa, the city of Abraham,

and also that employed by Hammurabi in the version of his Code that has come down to us. From this it would seem evident that if, at this epoch, a Canaanite alphabet had existed, the correspondents would not have had recourse to so complicated and difficult a system as that of the cuneiform.

It may be objected that while this may have been true of the period of the XVIIIth Dynasty, that is to say, of the time when the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt, it would not apply to the period of the Lawgiver himself. Let us again refer to the results of excavations. Those made in 1906 by Winckler¹ at Boghaz-Keui, the ancient Hittite capital, brought to light more than 2500 fragments of clay tablets of various dates, some score of which, of unusual dimensions, are almost complete. One of these is apparently the original draft of the famous treaty between Rameses II. and the Hittites, the existing Egyptian copy of which would therefore be merely a translation. Besides this, there are fragments of a correspondence with the same Egyptian monarch, similar to that of the Tel-el-Amarna letters.

Not a scrap of the 2500 fragments is written in any other script than cuneiform, and all the documents dealing with Egypt are in Babylonian, "the current written language of the East," as it is styled by Dr. Winckler.²

The excavations of 1907 at Boghaz-Keui are, in some respects, still more important. They have yielded fresh documents from the land of the *Amurri* or Amorites.

¹ *Orient. Literaturzeit.*, 1906, pp. 620 *et seq.*

² "In der allgemeinen Schriftsprache des Orients."

These documents are in Babylonian cuneiform ; the replies of the Hittites are in the Hittite language written in the same character. "The conditions of the country," says Dr. Winckler, "are mentioned in several Royal edicts and treaties drawn up in Hittite and Assyrian, in such a way as to give a sort of chronicle of the country of the Amorites, from the time of Subbiluluma (the first Hittite King) and Aziri (the Amorite known to us from the Tel-el-Amarna tablets) down to their great-nephews."¹ At this epoch, which is subsequent to that of Moses, the Amorites did not write in Hebrew.

The correspondence between Egypt and the Semitic peoples in the Mosaic and post-Mosaic times, was thus carried on in Babylonian cuneiform. Moses, a Semite, was born in Egypt. In that country he received his literary education, and it must therefore have been among the Israelites established there that he learnt the cuneiform script. Both that language and writing were those of legislators, such as Khammurabi, and we may well suppose that when Moses drew up his Laws, he availed himself of the language of that magnificent legislative monument which is now in our possession.

This is all the more probable, because the existence of any other Semitic script at this period is extremely problematical. The oldest document in ancient Hebrew letters, is the Inscription of Mesha,² of the time of

¹ *Mittheil. der Deutschen Orient. Gesellschaft*, No. 35, p. 42.

² The date of the inscription recently discovered at Gezer is still under discussion, but the most probable would seem to be that assigned to the monument by its discoverer, Mr. Macalister, viz. the end of the seventh century or the beginning of the sixth b.c.

Ahab, that is of a period when relations with Phœnicia were very frequent. Do the Phœnician characters, in which it is written, go back to a much earlier date? We are in complete ignorance on this point, but there is nothing to lead us to adopt this assumption, since the Phœnician inscriptions in general are much later in date. In the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, moreover, even the governors of Tyre and Sidon write also in Babylonian.

It remains to examine the argument drawn from the fact that the Canaanite names cited in the Pentateuch, are, as we are told, purely Hebrew.

It seems to me impossible to attach much weight to this argument. The Canaanite names are pure Hebrew, because they have been transcribed in Hebrew. A proper name passing into a foreign language, especially into the popular language, receives a form which assimilates it as far as possible to the latter. It takes a sound familiar to the ear of the foreigner who pronounces it. Instances of this are innumerable. A German name pronounced or written by a Frenchman always takes a more or less French appearance. Family names afford sufficient instances. But to confine ourselves to the writing, let any one take the personal names mentioned in the Scriptures as they appear in all the different translations, ancient and modern, and he will form some idea of the variety of ways in which they have been rendered.

Proofs are not lacking to show that the Hebrew

The proofs in support of this date are furnished by Father Vincent, in the learned monograph which he has published in the *Revue biblique internationale*, 6th year, p. 243.

writers knew perfectly well how to adapt foreign names to the sounds and usages of their own language. I need only cite one instance. An Aramaic inscription has just been found in Syria dealing with a King of Aram—Bar-Hadad, the son of Hazael. This King is known to us from the Book of Kings, where his name is transcribed in Hebrew as Ben-Hadad ; but it would be an extraordinary mistake to take this name as an example of the Aramaic language.

Finally, account must also be taken of what is called popular etymology, that is to say, the tendency to discover some meaning in a foreign word, and for that purpose to be guided solely by similarity of sound. Here again we are embarrassed by the number of examples to choose from. *Moses* is an Egyptian word which means “the child.” It has been slightly altered from its primitive form, and has been turned in Hebrew into *Mosheh*, in order to give it a meaning which has no connection with the original word. In the same way the first halting-place of the Israelites on leaving Egypt was the place called *Thuket* or *Thukot*. The word was slightly changed to make it *Succoth*, which means “Tents.” I need not pursue the subject farther, for I think I have shown sufficiently that the attempts to prove the existence of Hebrew by the aid of names given in the Hebrew texts is entirely futile.

To return to the Temple and Hilkiah’s discovery. The High Priest, as I infer, was unable to read the book he found, because it was written in a much earlier language or script than that of Josiah’s contemporaries. Some, however, may object, with Dr. Driver, that the style

of the book in many respects recalls that of Jeremiah. To explain this resemblance, we have merely to consult the continuation of the Biblical narrative. We see that King Josiah “sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem . . . the priests and the prophets and all the people both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the Covenant which was found in the house of Yahveh.”¹ Now, since the King intended to read the book in public, before proceeding to the great reform which the discovery was to bring about, it was absolutely imperative to give a version of the book in the language of the time, so that every one could understand it; this language was that of the Prophet then living, namely, Jeremiah. The writer who put Deuteronomy into a form which could be understood by the people did it in a remarkable manner. Dillmann cannot help expressing his admiration at the oratorical style of the book.

The narrative of the discovery of the book of the Law, and the explanation which we have given of it, leads us, as we have seen, to examine the question as to what was the language in which the most ancient books of the Hebrews were written. It remains now to formulate the conclusions which we should draw from this examination. These conclusions, as we have remarked before, do not appear to result so much from the contents and structure of the books themselves, as from the excavations made during the last few years in Palestine.

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 2 (R.V.).

The ancient books of the Hebrews, and particularly the Pentateuch, must to a great extent have been drawn up in Babylonian or Assyrian, and written in cuneiform characters. I am not the first to put forward this assertion. Dr. Jeremias, in dealing with the Decalogue, tells us that, arguing from the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, Moses must be regarded as having written the Ten Commandments in Babylonian cuneiform; the same writer, basing his proof on a passage in Isaiah (viii. 1), puts forward the theory that in the time of that prophet cuneiform was perhaps still regarded as the sacred script.¹

We will not discuss this latter point; but with regard to the former, we will go even farther than Dr. Jeremias. We believe that Moses wrote in Babylonian cuneiform those books which are attributed to him and of which he is the probable author.

This language, the current tongue of Western Asia, as it is styled by Dr. Winckler, as well as this script, was used at the outset by the Great Lawgiver, and after him by all the writers of books previous to the reign of Solomon. Their books would not therefore have been originally drawn up in Hebrew, but they would have been translated later into the language in vogue among the more recent editors, Ezra and others. I leave to the critics the task of discovering the names and dates of the latter. They must have done for these

¹ *Das Alte Testament im Lichte des alten Orients*, p. 263. This point of view was upheld by M. Philippe Berger in a recent publication, *Mélanges Hartwig Derenbourg*, p. 75.

books what Josiah did for Deuteronomy, when he resolved to read it aloud to the people.

It is far from being my wish to put forward as a well-established fact the possibly somewhat bold conclusion at which I have arrived—a conclusion which I submit to the judgment of those who are authorities on the subject of Semitic languages. But this conclusion seems forced upon me by the complete absence of any written Hebrew during the whole period previous to Solomon. This absence of Hebrew documents would not necessarily imply the non-existence of that language as a literary medium, if we had not at the same epoch a relatively large number of documents in Babylonian cuneiform. We cannot possibly imagine that Zimrida of Sidon, Abi-Milki of Tyre, Abd-Hiba of Jerusalem, and Yitia of Ashkelon would have written to the King of Egypt in Babylonian, had it not been their language and script, and the same remark applies to the correspondence between the Amorite Princes and the Hittite King.

I wish to make my meaning quite plain : I am speaking here of the *written* language only, that of official correspondence, legislature and literature, for it is extremely probable that the spoken language was somewhat different, and had much greater affinity with Hebrew or Phoenician. The glosses of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets are a proof of this. We have even a better instance in the Song of Deborah. This Song, which is a popular poem, is a chant sung by the people after their deliverance. A song of this kind is always in the language of those who are to sing it, and the language

is that which we might call the natural tongue, that which a man speaks from infancy and which has not been modified by his schooling or by literary conventions. Such is the case in our own time; how much more so among the Hebrews of the period of the Judges, when literary education must have been almost non-existent! A poem of the nature of the Song of Deborah is learned and transmitted by ear. We have a parallel in the national songs of our own age, songs which the students of folklore are at pains to collect, often in out-of-the-way places, before they are lost, for nowhere are they committed to writing. The Song of the Prophetess, which many Hebraists consider to be the most ancient fragment written in Hebrew, does not in any way prove that at the time when Deborah sang it, there existed a literary Hebrew language; it might well have been the *patois* of the period, and the song passed merely from mouth to mouth. It would seem therefore that the much-debated questions relating to the origin, date, and authenticity of the ancient Hebrew books now lie entirely within the domain of Assyriology. It is for the translators of the Code of Khammurabi, of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, and of the correspondence between the Amorites and the Hittites, to tell us what in the Pentateuch, for example, is a translation of an old cuneiform document, or what is an addition from the pen of an editor writing in Hebrew.

I believe that at present Professor Sayce is the only one who has set himself this task, and has undertaken its demonstration, which must open out wide issues.

He has already shown how, in the second chapter of Genesis, a large number of verses are reproductions of a Babylonish original,¹ and it would appear that several passages in the Books of Samuel will find their explanation by being attributed to a similar origin.

If it can be proved that the ancient writings of the Israelites are translations or adaptations into Hebrew of documents originally drawn up and written in Babylonian, it is evident that very important consequences will follow, which will surprisingly modify the results that Biblical criticism puts forward as well-established. I will briefly point out one or two examples.

To begin with, if we restore to these books the date assigned to them by their titles and by the Canon, it will mean that the composition of several of them which the critics relegate to a relatively recent period, must be attributed to much earlier times. How, moreover, can we give to literary evidence, to the numerous arguments drawn from style and language, the weight assigned to them by critics, when it is not a question of an *original* text, but of documents which have passed through such great and numerous changes? Drawn up and written in Babylonian cuneiform, they must have been turned into the Hebrew tongue, transcribed in ancient Hebrew, afterwards in square Hebrew, and finally subjected to the Masoretic punctuation which is considerably subsequent to the Christian era.

¹ "The Archæology of Genesis," *The Expository Times*, vol. xix. pp. 423, 470; vol. xx. p. 327.

When we consider the successive modifications which the text of these books has undergone, it is difficult to place absolute confidence in an analysis which makes a book like Genesis consist of various codes, with regard to the number even of which the critics are far from being agreed. It will be the work of the Assyriologists to settle the question of the Elohistic and Yahvistic narratives and of the Priestly Code and its date. The discovery, however, of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets and of the Code of Khammurabi has shown how profoundly erroneous it was to call post-Exilic everything that bore a Babylonian character, especially in legislation.

If the excavations have, up to the present time, yielded us no examples of ancient Hebrew, and have furnished us with cuneiform documents only, we may ask ourselves at what date cuneiform was supplanted by the ancient Hebrew script. The latter, as is proved by the inscription of Mesha, is identical with the Phoenician alphabet. We may therefore reasonably surmise that it was introduced into the country at a time when Phoenician influence was at its height. It would not have penetrated by an insensible infiltration. The enlightened section of the population would have centred round the person of the King, and included his Court officers and the priests. Among a people like the Israelites, the majority of whom were illiterate, the change of writing must have emanated from the authorities; it could only have been brought about by a Royal decree or by an edict proclaiming the King's command. Now, if there were a King who had close

relations with the Phœnicians, it was certainly Solomon. The First Book of Kings (chapter v.) describes in detail the friendly dealings of Solomon with Hiram, and the alliance which the former made with the King of Tyre. Hiram supplied his neighbour with cedar wood and building stones for the Temple ; he sent Solomon his best workers in metal and helped him very considerably in the entire construction of the Temple and Palace. It would almost appear as if Solomon would have been unable to build the house of Yahveh without the aid of his Phœnician neighbour.

We may therefore suppose that it was during this period of continuous relations between the Israelites and Phœnicians that Solomon adopted the Phœnician system of writing, and what makes this supposition still more probable is, that, not to mention the Book of Proverbs which bears his name, we are told of Solomon that he had literary tastes. This is what is reported of him : “ He spake three thousand proverbs : and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall : he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.”¹ Solomon is the only King of Israel who is described as an author, and without taking the above passage too literally, we may infer that he was more qualified than any of the Princes who reigned at Jerusalem to make a change in the script, and to adopt characters infinitely simpler and easier to handle than the cuneiform.

¹ 1 Kings iv. 31 (R.V.).

Doubtless the attribution of this step to Solomon is merely an hypothesis which needs proof to support it, but it appears to me that it is entirely in agreement both with the results of excavation and with what is told us of the life and character of the King.

We have, however, gone a long way from the discovery of the book of the Law under Josiah, which was our starting-point, and to which I return in conclusion.

It will be remarked that in the interpretation of the Biblical narrative which I have proposed, although I have treated the question specially from the archæological standpoint, I have adhered strictly to the text of the Books of Kings and Chronicles, in which I have made no modification and have rejected nothing. I have endeavoured to show how researches outside Palestine, as well as excavations in the country itself, throw light on a well-known passage. I believe that henceforward it is in the soil, in the excavations, that we shall find the solution of those important questions which criticism has hitherto sought too exclusively in literary and philological study and within the restricted limits of the sacred text.

THE END.

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